

# Tacrolimus for Glomerulonephritis

## Notes:

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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# Tacrolimus for Glomerulonephritis

## What is tacrolimus (ta kroe' li mus)?

Tacrolimus is a type of medication known as an immunosuppressant. This medication works by lowering your body's harmful response to immune system diseases like glomerulonephritis. This medication is used to control your disease.

## How do I take tacrolimus?

- Tacrolimus comes in 2 forms:
  - › Immediate (fast-acting) release (Prograf®)
  - › Extended (long-acting) release (Advagraf®)
- **Prograf® and Advagraf® are 2 different medications. You can only take 1 or the other, not both.**
- Take the capsules (pills) orally (by mouth). **Swallow each capsule whole. Do not split, crush, open, or chew the capsules.**
- There are different strengths available (0.5 mg, 1 mg, 5 mg). You may need a combination of different strengths to make up your dose.

- Tacrolimus can be transferred into breastmilk. Talk to your health care team before breastfeeding or chestfeeding. Your baby's health care provider may also need to check them more often. Talk with your health care team about the risks and benefits.

## How do I store this medication?

- Make sure to store tacrolimus in a dry place at room temperature away from sunlight.
- **Do not store tacrolimus in the bathroom.**
- Keep out of reach of children and pets.

## What else do I need to know?

- Tacrolimus can interact with many medications. Other medications may affect the amount of tacrolimus in your body. It is important you talk with your pharmacist or health care team before starting any new medications, including over-the-counter medications, supplements, and natural products.
- Talk to your health care team about when to get certain vaccines while taking tacrolimus. Ask if there are any vaccines you should get to protect you while taking this medication.

- Tacrolimus may increase your risk of getting an infection. Wash your hands often and avoid close contact with anyone who may be sick. **If you are not feeling well** (like a bad sore throat or cough, pain when you pee) **and you have a fever** (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F) **or chills, tell your health care team right away.**
- Tacrolimus may add to your risk of some cancers. Talk to your primary health care provider about screening tests you may need based on your age and sex.
  - › **Do not** use tanning beds.

- › Always protect yourself from the sun by wearing sunscreen, protective clothing, and a hat.

### **Is tacrolimus safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding?**

- Tacrolimus can enter the bloodstream of the fetus. Talk with your health care team about the risks and benefits before taking tacrolimus if you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant.

- **If you are taking Prograf®:**
  - › Take it 2 times a day, 12 hours apart.
  - › For example, if you take your first dose at 7 a.m., take your second dose in the evening at 7 p.m.
- **If you are taking Advagraf®:**
  - › Take it once a day in the morning.
- You can take tacrolimus with or without food, but **you must take it the same way every time.**
  - › For example, if you take it with food, always take it with food. If you do not take it with food, never take it with food.
- **Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while taking tacrolimus.** Grapefruit and grapefruit juice can raise the dose of tacrolimus in your body, causing more side effects.

## What if I miss a dose?

- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember.
- If it almost time to take your next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at the regular time.
- **Do not take a double dose of medication.** This could lead to more side effects.

## How will I know if the medication is working?

- You will have regular blood tests while taking this medication. This is to check how your body responds to tacrolimus. This will also help to lower any side effects.
- You will also have blood tests to check the level of tacrolimus in your body. This helps to determine your dose.
- On the day of your blood test to check your tacrolimus level, **do not** take your medication until after your blood test.
  - › Go to the blood lab in the morning at the time you would normally take your medication.
  - › Take your normal dose of tacrolimus as soon as possible after your blood test.

## What are the possible side effects?

- Common side effects of tacrolimus include:
  - › Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
  - › Vomiting (throwing up)
  - › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
  - › Loss of appetite (not feeling hungry)
  - › Headache
  - › Muscle cramps
  - › Hair loss or thinning (usually, hair grows back once you are no longer taking the medication)
  - › Tremors (body movements you cannot control)
  - › Trouble sleeping
  - › Tiredness
- These side effects may go away as you get used to the medication. If you keep having these side effects, talk to your health care team.
- Tacrolimus may raise your blood pressure, blood potassium, cholesterol, or blood sugar. Your regular blood tests will check for these. Your kidney function will also be checked.